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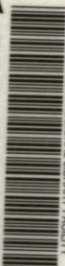
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No. II

THE PRINTING PRESS  
OF THE  
FRENCH FLEET

# CALENDRIER

FRANÇAIS,

Pour l'Année Commune 1781.

CONTENANT

*Le Calcul ordinaire du lever & du coucher du Soleil, de la Lune & leur Déclinaison.*

*Un État des Officiers de l'Escadre, & des principaux de l'Armée aux ordres de M. le Comte de ROCHAMBEAU.*

*Les Époques les plus intéressantes de la Guerre présente, avec les Routes du Continent.*



A NEWPORT,

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De l'Imprimerie Royale de l'Escadre. près le Parc de la Marine..

# *CALENDRIER FRANÇAIS*

*POUR L'ANNÉE 1781*

AND

THE PRINTING PRESS

OF THE

FRENCH FLEET

IN AMERICAN WATERS DURING

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

By

HOWARD MILLAR CHAPIN

LIBRARIAN OF THE

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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One hundred fifty copies  
reprinted from  
*The Providence Magazine*

## THE "CALENDRIER FRANÇAIS."

The Rhode Island Historical Society obtained last November a small book entitled "Calendrier Français, Pour l'Année Commune 1781." The "Calendrier Français," as this book is commonly called, is remarkable in several respects. It was discovered by a bookseller in a small Massachusetts town and was purchased by him for a few dollars. As he realized the value of the book he immediately offered it for sale at auction, and after spirited bidding it was finally sold for \$525.00.

This is the only copy of this book now known to be in existence. It was printed after December 15th, in the winter of 1780-1 and was soon forgotten, but a century later Edwin M. Stone, in 1884, in "Our French Allies" (p. 352) quotes from the *Calendrier*, and states that in 1854 there were said to be only two copies in existence. Hammett copied Stone, and subsequently bibliographers have copied Hammett. The two copies of the *Calendrier* soon disappeared, and historians have sought in vain to locate a copy of the work.

This book is particularly interesting because it is the first almanac printed in French in Rhode Island, and probably the first French almanac printed within what is now the United States, having, as the title page states, been printed, "A Newport, De l'Imprimerie Royale de l'Escadre, près le Parc de la Marine." It will be remembered that on May 2, 1780, a French fleet under Admiral De Ternay sailed from Brest, carrying over 6000 troops to assist General Washington, and that the fleet reached Newport on the evening of July 11th. They were greeted by a general illumination of the city and harbour. The custom then instituted, has come down to our own time, for once every summer Newport holds its "Illumination," which now takes place upon the arrival of the New York Yacht Club on its annual cruise. The French fleet remained at Newport until March, 1781, and during the winter of 1780-81 many of its officers took up their abode on shore. On board the fleet was a printing press used for the printing of notices and orders, and this press, according to a contemporary account, was set up on shore at No. 641 Water street, and as the title page of the *Calendrier* states, "près le Parc de la Marine," which was located at 611 Water street.

Another reason that makes the "*Calendrier*" interesting is that it is the first Roman Catholic almanac printed in Rhode Island, or in fact in the United States. At this time there were no Catholics in Rhode Island, but the majority of the soldiers and sailors among our French allies were of that faith.

The title page, giving the contents of the "*Calendrier*," reads as follows:

## "Contenant

Le Calcul ordinaire du lever & du coucher du Soleil, de la Lune & leur Déclinaison.

Un État des Officiers de l'Escadre & des principaux de l'Armée aux ordres de M. le Comte de Rochambeau.

Les Époques les plus intéressantes de la Guerre présente, avec les Routes du Continent."

The first part, the astronomical calculation, occupies pages 1 to 25, the second part, the list of officers, occupies pages 26 to 32, and the third part doubtless owing to the exigencies of war was never printed.

The "Avertissement," printed on the back of the title page and so facing page one, reads as follows: "La précipitation avec laquelle on a été obligé de calculer la partie astronomique de cet Almanach, n'a pas permis d'y apporter toute la précision que l'on eût désiré; on a été obligé de se servir de méthodes promptes, afin qu'il put être imprimé le plutôt possible: on ne sera donc point surpris d'y trouver des erreurs de deux ou trois minutes à l'instant du lever ou du coucher du Soleil, & d'autres plus considérables encore, sur le lever & le coucher de la Lune."

Page one is entitled "Articles Principaux du Calendrier Pour l'Année Commune 1781," and contains the number of the year according to the various calculations, the chronological tables, which our colonial almanac-makers called "Vulgar Notes," an account of the eclipses for the year, "Festes Mobiles" (Movable feasts) and "Quatre-Temps" or Ember Days, which latter do not appear in New England almanacs of the period.

The calendar proper begins on page 2 and gives two pages to each month. Unlike its American contemporaries, it gives the name of the days of the week instead of their number. It also gives the name of the saint for each day in the year, an item never included in American colonial almanacs.

Besides giving the day of the month, the day of the week, and the saint's day, the calendar for each month gives the time of sunrise and sunset, the longitude and declination of the sun, the days of the moon and the rising, southing and setting of the moon. At the bottom of each left-hand page is given the increase or decrease in the length of day, and at the bottom of each right-hand page is given the date and time of the moon's phases. The time, in all cases, is given in hours and minutes, with the seconds omitted.

It is interesting to compare the astronomical calculations of the *Calendrier Français* with those of its contemporary Rhode Island almanacs. Benjamin West, the noted astronomer, calculated for three Rhode Island almanacs for 1781, and we may presume that

his calculations were very nearly accurate. They differ from those of the *Calendrier* some two or three minutes with regard to sunrise. Taking West for the standard, we find that on January 2 the *Calendrier* is one minute fast, on January 31 it has become two minutes fast, and on February 28, three minutes fast. It is identical with West for March 1, but has become two minutes slow by March 31. Thus it varies slightly from time to time, ending on December 31 with calculations identical with those of West of that day. As the "avertissement" states that the calculations for the moon are less accurate than those for the sun, and we sometimes find a discrepancy of over an hour between the two almanacs in the time given for the setting of the moon. The phases of the moon, as given in the *Calendrier* and in the West almanacs are sometimes identical to the minute, as on November 30, and sometimes there is a difference of a day, as on the 15th and 16th of January.

The second part of the *Calendrier* is of far more historical value and particularly so in this copy on account of the manuscript annotations, evidently made by some officer of the fleet.

Page 26 is entitled "Escadre" and under the sub-title "Etat-Major" some one has written in ink "Monsieur de Barras." This refers to Louis, Count de Barras Saint Laurent, who took command of the fleet after the death of Admiral De Ternay. As neither the name of De Ternay nor that of de Barras appears in the printed list, it is evident that the "*Calendrier*" was printed after De Ternay's death, which occurred on December 15, and before the news reached Newport that de Barras had been appointed to succeed him. A list of the officers of the squadron follows, and the manuscript annotations are of considerable interest.

After the name of M. De Cheffontaine Capitaine en second of "Le Conquérant" is written "tué." The same is also written after the names of MM. De Kergus and De Macarty, both Enseignes de vaisseau, while "tué a Chesapeake" appears after the name of M. De la Jonquiere, Enseign. These officers were all of "Le Conquérant."

"Mort" is added after the name of M. De Marsilly, Lieutenant on board "L'Eveille."

"Blesse au jambe" is placed after the name of M. Lamoisse, Officier auxiliaire on "L'Ardent."

"Tue" is found after the names of M. Misnessi de Quier, Enseign de Vaisseau and MM. Bonniec and Tranchant, both Officiers auxiliaire on "La Surveillante." M. Scot, Garde de la Marine of "La Surveillante," was evidently transferred to "Le Duc de Bourgoyne," for after his name is written "d'abord Le Duc de Bourgoyne." At the bottom of page 30 a manuscript note reads: "Ces officiers de la Surveillante furent tué dans une combat navale avec un Vaisseau de 50 Canons pour l'espace de 3 heures."

Pages 31 and 32 contain a list of the chief officers of the "Armée aux Orders de M. le Comte de Rochambeau."

The historical importance of the *Calendrier* is brought out by the fact that "La Surveillante" and four other warships mentioned therein are not mentioned in "Les Combattants Français de la Guerre Américaine," published in 1903 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, and that several of the manuscript annotations record facts which seem to have been unknown to the compilers of that extensive and valuable work.

Besides the *Calendrier Français* which we have described, we know of five other works issued by "l'Imprimerie Royale de l'Escadre" while the vessels were in North American waters.

The earliest is entitled "Déclaration adressés, au nom de Roi de France, à tous les Américaines François de l'Amérique Septentrionale." It was dated "dans le port du Boston, le 28 d'Octobre 1778," and states that it was "Imprimé à bord du Languedoc par F. P. Demange, Imprimeur du Roi & de l'Escadre." No copy of this declaration has been located.

The largest work from the "Imprimerie" was printed at Newport and is the first edition of M. de Chastellux' "Voyage de Newport à Philadelphie." This is a book of 187 pages and has been often reprinted. There are but four copies of the "Escadre" edition now known to exist, and these are preserved at the New York Public Library, the Harvard College Library, and in the private libraries of Mr. Huntington and Mr. Halsey.

Another important work from this press, the one which perhaps is of the greatest historical value, is a seven-page pamphlet entitled "Articles de la Capitulation." This is the first draft of the articles of Cornwallis' surrender, together with Washington's comments thereon, printed in French. This document was "Fait à York en Virginie, le 19 Octobre 1781." The only recorded copy is at the John Carter Brown Library in Providence.

From advertisements in "*The Providence Gazette*" for 27 Dec., 1780, and "*The American Journal*" of Providence for 23 Dec., 1780, we learn that a newspaper, "*La Gazette Français de Newport*," was published by the "Imprimerie de l'Escadre," which at this time was set up on shore at Newport. No copy of this paper has yet been located. As the Providence printers at this time had no French type, it is clear that these advertisements must have been set up at the "Imprimerie" and shipped from Newport to Providence for printing. The advertisements read as follows: "Nous prenons ici les Souscriptions par la *Gazette Française de Newport*, à un demi Gourde par mois."

Another work from this press is entitled "L'Amour paternel qui a toujours animé le coeur du Roy pour les habitants du Canada." This

is a folio broadside and is signed by La Fayette. The only copy of this proclamation is at the Boston Athenaeum.

The works from this press it will be seen are quite rare, numbering at present only seven recorded copies. This is doubtless due to the fact that only a few copies of each were printed, the aim of the printer being simply to supply the few officers who would be interested.











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